Love's Illusion

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Love's Illusion

by Elysian333

Summary

Set in season 1

Will and Hannibal met months prior to the meeting in Jack's office, at that point they are already in a comfortable relationship. Will spends his nights going over the Ripper cases with Hannibal, unaware that the man he is searching for is closer than he thinks.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

Will was exhausted, the Chesapeake Ripper struck again with his 4th victim, which meant that he was running out of time to catch the killer. He sighed sitting down on the rocking chair he had on his porch, Winston came over whining as if he sensed Will's stress.

He smiled scratching behind his ears, “I'm okay buddy.” He leaned back to allow the dog to rest his head on his knee.

Will continued to stroke his fur, the softness of it kept him grounded. A bright set of lights broke the darkness, he sighed figuring it was Crawford coming to drag him back to the lab.

It wasn't until a familiar Bentley came into view that Will relaxed, he closed his eyes just as he heard a door shut. “I haven't heard from you all day, I was beginning to think Jack had you working overtime.” Will scoffed some, “not yet, I guess he's just building suspension.”

He heard Hannibal chuckle, “how are you feeling Will?” There was a hint of concern in his voice, Will opened his eyes but kept his gaze focused on Winston. “I'm fine.” He lied, even though it was pointless, Hannibal had learned to see through his lies.

He felt Hannibal’s gaze on him. “You don’t look fine,” he said, his tone gentle but firm. “This case is taking a toll on you.”

Will sighed, continuing to scratch Winston behind the ears. “I’m just tired. It’s nothing I can’t handle.”

Hannibal moved closer to the empath. “You need to take care of yourself, Will. Pushing yourself too hard won’t help you catch the Ripper.”

Will finally looked up, meeting those dark eyes. “I know, but I can’t just stop. Every minute I’m not working is another minute the Ripper has to find his next victim.”

Hannibal crouched in front of him, gently taking Will's chin in his hand. “When was the last time you slept properly, or had a decent meal?” He asked him softly, Will shrugged, focusing back on Winston. That didn't satisfy the other man, “you know that isn't an answer.”

Will sighed, “a few days ago.” He eventually mumbled, “the night I stayed over at your house.” Hannibal hummed, pulling his hand away. “Well if that is the case, let's go.” The empath looked up at him confused, “what do you mean?” The other man looked at him, speaking as if it were obvious. “You said the last time you took care of yourself was when you stayed with me. So tonight you'll be staying at my place, that way I know you're taking care of yourself.”

He rolled his eyes, crossing his arms. “I don't need you to babysit me, I'm fine.”

Hannibal raised his eyebrow, “I can see your eyebags from here and last I checked you had nothing but TV dinners in your freezer. That is hardly taking care of yourself.” Will hated

that he was right, he removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes. “I just don't want you to feel like you have to take care of me, I'm a grown man.”

Hannibal gave him a small smile, “I take care of you because I want to.” He reached his hand out for Will to take, which he did. “I have to feed the dogs real fast, then we can go.” He reluctantly agreed, Hannibal gave his hand a small squeeze, “I'll go wait in the car.”

It didn't take long to get the dogs food ready, after he separated it into their respective bowls, he made sure to give each of them a small scratch behind the ears. “I'll be back in the morning, behave yourselves.” With that he shut the door, locking it behind him.

He climbed in the passenger seat of the car, “you spoil those dogs too much.” Hannibal teased playfully, Will laughed “I just want to give them the life they deserve is all.”

Classical music filled the car as Hannibal drove them to his house, “how was work today?” Will asked, looking out the window watching the trees pass. “It was just like any other day, same patients with the same stories.” The empath nodded, “sounds pretty boring to me.”

The doctor chuckled, “it may sound boring to someone who catches killers for a living. I however rather enjoy it, you meet some interesting people in my line of work.”
Will hummed, “I bet you do.”

At some point Will fell into a restless sleep, and was awakened with a gentle shake of his shoulder. “We reached our destination, I'll start dinner when we get inside.” He climbed out of the car still half asleep, “you could have left me in the car.” Hannibal didn't seem to find that amusing, “I brought you here so you'd be comfortable.”

After dinner, Hannibal cleared the plates while Will leaned back in his chair, feeling the heaviness of the meal and the exhaustion of the day settling into his bones. He watched Hannibal move around the kitchen with effortless grace, each movement precise and deliberate.

There was something comforting in Hannibal's efficiency, a stark contrast to the chaos swirling in Will's mind. "Why don't you take a seat in the living room?" Hannibal suggested, glancing over his shoulder. "I'll bring dessert shortly."

Will nodded and made his way to the living room, settling into a comfortable armchair. The room was warmly lit, filled with books and art that hinted at Hannibal's refined tastes. Will closed his eyes, letting the quietude of the space envelop him.

He hadn't realized he'd drifted off until he felt a gentle hand on his shoulder. Startled, he opened his eyes to see Hannibal standing over him with a small smile. "Sorry," Will mumbled, rubbing his eyes. "I didn't mean to fall asleep again."

"No need to apologize," Hannibal said, handing him a small bowl. "You need the rest." Will took the bowl, savoring the rich aroma. "What kind of dessert did you make?" Hannibal's eyes twinkled. "A simple crème brûlée. I thought something light would be appropriate."

Will took a spoonful, the delicate custard melting in his mouth. "This is incredible," he said, genuinely impressed.

Hannibal inclined his head. "Tell me more about the case, maybe discussing it will help ease your mind."

Will hesitated for a moment, then nodded, setting his bowl down. "The Chesapeake Ripper... he's methodical, precise. Each kill is like a work of art to him. But there's something more to it. He's not just killing randomly. There's a pattern, a message he's trying to convey."

Hannibal leaned forward, his expression attentive. "And what do you think that message is?" Will sighed, running a hand through his hair. "I'm not sure yet. But I feel like I'm close. Every victim... there's a connection, something that ties them together. I just need to figure out what it is."

Hannibal nodded thoughtfully. "It's a daunting task, to understand the mind of a killer. But you have a unique gift, Will. Your empathy allows you to see things others cannot."

"Sometimes I wish I didn't have it," Will admitted, his voice barely above a whisper. "It's like carrying a piece of darkness inside me."

Hannibal's gaze softened. "It's a burden, yes. But it also makes you who you are. It's what allows you to catch these killers, to bring them to justice."

Will met his eyes, feeling a strange comfort in Hannibal's words. "I suppose you're right. But it doesn't make it any easier."

"No, it doesn't," Hannibal agreed. "But you don't have to face it alone. I'll be by your side, ready to pull you back if you fall too deep."

Will gave him a tired smile, “or I'll pull you down with me.” Hannibal hummed taking the abandoned bowl, “I'd still be by your side would I not?” Before he had a chance to respond, the man walked away leaving Will alone with his thoughts.

When he returned, he had two glasses in his hand. “I figured you'd like something to help you relax, before we retire for the night.”

He took the glass of rich amber liquid with thanks, the pair drank in silence enjoying each other's company. A sudden wave of drowsiness overcame Will, he sat his glass down as his vision began to fade to black.

“I suppose it's time for bed.” Hannibal's smooth voice broke the silence, wrapping around Will like a blanket, which only added to his drowsiness. He stood on shaky legs, grabbing onto Hannibal to steady himself. “Maybe a drink wasn't the best idea.” Will mumbled tiredly.

Hannibal helped him up the stairs and to his room, “let me get you something to change into.” The empath nodded, practically falling on the bed. He didn't hear the other man return, until clothes were placed beside. “Would you like help getting dressed?”

“I can do it..” He spoke sluggishly, truthfully he didn't want to change. He was perfectly fine with falling asleep in what he was wearing, however he knew Hannibal wouldn't agree.

His body felt heavy as he changed into his pajamas, when the task was complete he fell back against the bed, sinking into the silk sheets.

Will felt the bed sink beside him, instantly he turned towards the warmth. He heard a chuckle, “rest now, I'm not going anywhere.” He sighed contently as Hannibal wrapped his arm around his shoulders, pulling the empath close enough that he could rest his head against the man’s chest.

Fingers carded through his hair, that paired with the warmth made him relax even more until he eventually drifted off.

He was in such a deep sleep, that nightmares didn't plague him like they usually do. He also didn't notice when the warmth disappeared, only to return hours later.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The Chesapeake Ripper strikes again....or does he?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will woke up to the smell of breakfast cooking, he sat up fumbling for his glasses. The clock on the bedside table read 7:45, which is probably the longest the empath had slept undisturbed in awhile.

He checked his phone once he got ready for the day, only a couple missed calls from Jack, but he could worry about that later. With a tired sigh the agent made his way downstairs and to the kitchen, Hannibal's back facing him as he cooked.

Will wrapped his arms around the taller man, and rested his head on his shoulder. “Good morning darling, did you sleep well?” He nodded, “what are you making?” He mumbled against the man's shirt, still feeling a bit drowsy.

“Just something quick, sausage, eggs, and fresh fruit.” Hannibal turned his head, placing a kiss against the empath’s curls, “why don't you go sit at the table?”

He wasn't about to object to that, so he made his way over and sat down. For some reason Will’s head felt fuzzy, the beginnings of a headache forming behind his eyes. The empath laid his head against his arms, “would you like some coffee Will?” Hannibal's voice broke through the haze, without lifting his head, he answered.

“Please, and some aspirin too if you have any.” The sound of a plate being sat down, caused him to lift his head.

The doctor had a worried look on his face, “are you feeling alright?” He asked concerned, Will just waved dismissively. “Just a headache, I'll be fine.” Hannibal didn't seem to believe him, but didn't push the issue.

When he returned, he handed Will a cup of coffee and two aspirin which he took gratefully. “Thank you for making breakfast and the medicine.”

Hannibal smiled, “you know you don't have to thank me.”

The pair ate in silence, after a while the headache Will was feeling, soon became nothing but a dull ache. After breakfast, the empath helped Hannibal with the dishes. Will was in the

middle of drying a plate, when his phone went off. Jack's name lit up on the screen, "you should probably take that." The psychiatrist pointed out, when Will pointedly ignored it.

With a small groan, he dried his hands and answered. "About time you answered Graham, get down here now we have another victim." Before Will could even respond, the man hung up. "I have to go, another victim has come up."

Hannibal nodded, "don't push yourself too hard. If you need me, never hesitate to call me." Will gave him a small smile, "I won't." He gave him a quick kiss, and was out the door.

Will arrived at the address Jack sent him, when he walked in Jack's angry face greeted him. "I stopped by your house this morning, where were you?" The empath raised his eyebrow, "I was out, where's the victim?"

The head of the science unit led Will over to the stage, "the janitor found him this morning. I have Beverly going over the security footage now, Jimmy and Brian have already taken pictures, all that's left is you."

The empath wasn't sure what he was expecting, however seeing the neck of a cello sticking out of a mans throat was not it. "Well well well, look who finally decided to show up." Brian pipped up from where he was talking with Jimmy, Will shot him a glare but didn't retaliate.

Will did a circle around the body, before glancing at Jack. The older man seemed to get the hint, and ushered everyone away. Taking a breath to steel his nerves, he removed his glasses and closed his eyes.

Something felt off about this crime scene, this didn't feel like the work of the ripper. Going through the crime only solidified his suspicion, the sound of someone clapping broke him from his playing. When he looked up, the dead eyes of Garrett Jacob Hobbs stared back at him. With a start, Will jumped out of the trance-like state. His heart was pounding in time with his head, "everything alright Will?"

Beverly stood beside him, a look of concern etched on her face. "I'm fine…just a little tired." He replied shakily, she nodded some not believing him but clearly didn't want to upset him.

The agent placed his glasses back on, feeling safer now that the shield was back in place. "What did you see?" Jack asked, his arms crossed. "It's not the ripper, this is the work of a skilled musician. It could be someone from the same orchestra who acted out of jealousy, or at most someone who works on instruments."

The older man raised his eyebrow, "how are you positive this is not the ripper?" He asked skeptically, Will had to suppress an eye roll. "He didn't take any organs, which is the Chesapeake Ripper's signature."

That seemed to convince the man, "Katz anything from the security footage?" She shook her head, "nothing from last night was recorded. I checked multiple times, the footage starts yesterday morning, cuts to black and then picks up again this morning."

Jack sighed, rubbing his temple “alright let's head back to the labs and see what we can learn from there.”

Will ended up leaving after a few hours, making his way to Hannibal's office. Just as he got into the waiting area, one of the doctor's patients was leaving. “You have a good night now Franklin, I'll see you at our next appointment.” The short man, Franklin, apparently nodded and went on his way.

“I wasn't expecting to see you until later, are you feeling alright?” Will wanted to tell Hannibal that he had been seeing Hobbs, however he knew that would only further worry the man so he decided against it.

“I'm fine.” He said for what must have been the hundredth time today, “care to go over the case with me?” He asked, knowing that the man wouldn't say no. “Of course, care to tell me what you know so far?”

Will sat at Hannibal's desk, the case file opened and spread out before them. Hannibal stood behind the chair, looking over the pictures. The office was dimly lit, the evening light from the widows cast long shadows on the walls. The air was thick with the scent of leather-bound books and polished wood, a comforting yet unsettling mix. The agent leaned forward, his eyes intense as he spoke.

"We're dealing with a musician," he began, his voice tinged with the fascination he often felt when unraveling the minds of killers.

"The victim's body was transformed into an instrument, meticulously altered. The vocal cords were shrunk and tanned like strings being prepared for a violin."

Hannibal's eyes gleamed with interest, his posture as composed as ever. "A musician, you say? What led you to this conclusion?"

Will's gaze flickered to one of the pictures showcasing the body, recalling the details of the crime scene. "The care, the use of specialized substances—it's not something an amateur would do. This person knows what they're doing, has experience with musical instruments or at least understands their construction. It's as if he's trying out a new instrument, experimenting."

"A new instrument," The taller man echoed with intrigue. "So, you believe this is a novel experience for the killer?"

The empath nodded. "It feels like a performance killing, something classical in its execution. Not just the brutality, but the artistry. This wasn't his first kill, but it might be the first time he's expressed himself this way. Like a musician debuting a new piece."

Hannibal tilted his head slightly, a subtle gesture of approval. "An artist seeking a new medium. The parallels between creation and destruction are indeed compelling."

He picked up one of the pictures that had a close-up of the victim's throat. "The care taken with the vocal cords suggests a desire to preserve, to create something enduring from the

ephemeral."

Will hummed in agreement, standing from the chair to stretch his legs. "It's almost as if he wanted to hear the victim's voice again. But this isn't about remembrance. It's about control, making the victim's voice his own."

Hannibal's lips curved into a slight smile. "An intriguing theory, darling. The idea of control through such intimacy means that it's a rare kind of power. This killer seeks more than mere death; he seeks to leave an indelible mark, to immortalize his artistry."

The empath made his way over to one of the windows, "now we just have to find him before he decides to create a new instrument."

Hannibal put everything back in the case file, "that can be a problem for tomorrow. Would you like to stay the night again, or do you wish to go home?" He asked, his voice calming Will's frayed nerves.

"I should probably head home, I gotta feed the dogs and take them for a walk since they've been cooped up." The doctor nodded in understanding, "promise me you'll try and get some rest?" His dark gaze bored into Will, "I promise."

That made him smile, "thank you. I'll see you tomorrow then Will, I still have some work to finish otherwise I'd walk you out." The agent shrugged, "it's alright, I'll see you tomorrow." He placed a kiss on the man's cheek, before leaving.

The sound of barking filled Will's ears as he made his way up onto his porch, he smiled unlocking the door. Instantly he was greeted by dozens of paws jumping up against his legs. He gave them all scratches, trying to squeeze inside. "Hey guys, I know I missed you too."

He made them their food, and took them outside to run around. Something moving at the edge of the trees caught his eyes, at first he thought it was one of the dogs. However when it moved again, it was much bigger than any of his dogs.

Confused he made his way over to the tree line, the creature was eating grass completely unaware of Will. When he got close enough, he realized it was some sort of stag. It wasn't a normal one however, this one appeared to be covered in feathers rather than fur.

Just as the empath got close enough to touch it, he stepped on a stick which startled the stag, causing it to run off.

Will contemplated following it, but decided against it. He made his way home letting all the dogs in, Winston seemed reluctant at first wanting to stay close to him. He scratched behind his ears, "come on buddy, let's go to bed."

The empath was well aware that he had forgotten to eat, however he was so exhausted that he didn't even care. He changed into a thin shirt and boxers, before climbing into bed. Winston curled up on the floor beside him, allowing Will to pet the top of his head. It took awhile but he eventually drifted off, the feathered stag still on his mind.

Chapter End Notes

Heyyy here is chapter 2, I made this one longer than the first to make up for not posting in awhile.

As I said on my other story, work picked up so I haven't been able to post like I wanted to. I will try and get better at posting more, thank you all for understanding!!

I hope you enjoy this chapter, I appreciate every single one of you♡

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

I feel like this quote fits this chapter

"You cannot make everyone think and feel as deeply as you do. This is your tragedy, because you understand them but they do not understand you."

- Daniel Saint

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will woke up in a cold sweat, his chest rising and falling rapidly as he tried to control his breathing. His curls clung to his forehead, the empath sat up running a hand through his hair. The clock on the bedside table read 3:14am, he sighed, stripping himself of his soaked shirt.

Garrett Jacob Hobbs haunted his nightmares as usual, except he wasn't alone this time. Standing beside the dead man, was the feather stag he'd seen last night.

A nudge on his hand caught his attention, Winston stared up at Will. He let out a small whine, until the empath started petting him. “I'm okay boy, just another bad dream…nothing I haven't handled before.” Going back to bed would be pointless, he'd just wake up in a frenzy again due to yet another nightmare.

Instead he got up, letting a couple of the dogs that were awake outside. The fresh air felt cool against his bare chest, the early morning peace helped calm his whirling mind.

The nightmares have always been bad due to his empathy disorder, however as more and more victims showed up. They seemed to get frequent, and more realistic. Staying with Hannibal was the only way he was able to get any rest, the agent regretted not taking the doctor up on his offer. But at the same time he didn't, just because the two were together. Doesn't mean that Will had to become a burden to the man, no matter how many times Hannibal insisted that he wasn't.

The sound of his phone ringing from inside snapped him out of his thoughts, he didn't need to look at it to know who it was either.

After rounding up the dogs, Will went inside. Just as he suspected, Jack Crawford’s name flashed on his phone screen. An exasperated sigh escaped him as he answered.

“Why didn’t you answer my first two calls?” Jack demanded.

Will’s patience was thin, and he let his irritation slip. “Maybe because it’s three in the morning, Jack. Most people are asleep at this hour.”

He could sense Jack’s frustration even through the phone. “Well, you’re not most people. Get to the lab. We might have a lead on the musician case.” The line abruptly went silent as Jack hung up.

Rubbing his tired eyes, Will couldn’t help but wonder how he’d ended up here—once just an instructor at the academy, now reduced to a glorified errand boy for the head of the BSU.

Resigned, he fed his dogs, threw on some decent clothes, and downed a bitter cup of coffee before heading out the door.

When the empath reached the lab, he was greeted by an angry Jack. “Dr. Bloom will be taking over your class for today, I have a job for you.” Will suppressed an eye roll, “no surprise there.” He mumbled, uncaring if the older man heard or not.

“You said that our killer is more than likely a musician or someone who works with instruments. Well Katz did some digging, and there is a string shop not far from where the murder took place. I want you to go down there and talk with the owner, maybe get a feel if anything is suspicious or not.”

Will furrowed his brows in confusion, “why have me go down there when you're capable of going yourself?”

Jack rubbed his temple, “because I don't have your ability.” He stated, then before Will could even speak, the man held his hand up. “I'll have two officers going with you, in case you find something out, the location is called Chordophone String Shop.”

When Will and the officers arrived at the shop, a man presumably the owner was walking a young boy out. "Can I help you, gentlemen?" He asked, looking at them quizzically, Will flashed his badge. "I'm special agent Will Graham, are you the owner of this shop?"

The man nodded, "The name is Tobias Budge, let me walk this student out, and then I'll be right with you." While he was talking with the young boy, the empath looked around the shop. "Alright, what can I do for you, Agent Graham?" Tobias asked, his hands clasped in front of him.

"I'd like to ask you a few questions about the murder of Douglas Wilson."

Tobias, leaning back slightly, responded with a faint smile. "The trombone player," he remarked with an air of nonchalance. "I heard about him, Baltimore’s a small town, and the art community is even smaller." He finished explaining after Will gave him a questioning look.

The empath gave a slight nod, noting how Tobias seemed unusually well-informed. Something about the man’s tone made the agent uneasy. "You seem to know a lot," Will observed, his suspicions beginning to surface.

Tobias chuckled softly, however didn’t comment. "Someone mentioned his throat was cut, and they tried to play his vocal cords with a bow."

The choice of words struck Will as odd, prompting him to press further. "Why do you say ‘tried’?"

Tobias didn’t hesitate, explaining with a cool demeanor. "The strings need to be treated," he said, as though it were obvious. "You can’t just cut someone up and draw a bow across their innards, expecting it to make a sound. It takes preparation, care… precision."

The empath felt a cold realization begin to settle in as he scrutinized Tobias. "The vocal cords were chemically treated," Will stated carefully, watching for any sign of a reaction. "Much like catgut string is treated. That information was kept out of the press.”

Before he had a chance to do anything Budge spoke up, his demeanor showing no signs of fear. “It might not have been in the press Agent Graham, however the information was on Tattle Crime.”

Irritation flooded Will's senses, of course Freddie Lounds got her hands on the case already. Something wasn't adding up though, now the empath wasn't one to judge much, but Tobias didn't seem like the type of person who'd browse a gossip site like Tattle Crime.

Movement caught the corner of Will's eye, confused he looked towards the window catching the tail end of something familiar. Mr. Budge looked towards the window as well, “will you excuse me for a moment?” The empath asked, Tobias nodded. “Of course, I'll be here to answer any further questions.”

Will was out the door not even a moment later, he looked around not seeing the feathered stag anywhere. He jogged towards the small alleyway, however the creature was nowhere in sight. The empath chuckled some to himself, taking his glasses off to rub his eyes. “Congratulations Graham, just when you thought you couldn't become more of a freak, you make it worse by seeing things that aren't there.” He half heartedly joked to himself, before slipping his glasses on and heading back to the string shop.

“Sorry for leaving abruptly, there was something I neede…” Will froze when he saw the sight before him, one of the officers was lying in a pool of his own blood. The other was missing, however bloody footprints lead further into the shop.

Taking his gun out, he followed the footprints unsure of where they'd lead to. The door to the basement was opened, the footprints disappearing down the steps.

When Will reached the bottom, the footprints stopped. The body of the second officer was motionless, in a similar state as the officer upstairs except this guy was strangled. The empath cursed under his breath, if he hadn't gotten distracted this wouldn't have happened. Now he just had to find Tobias, he walked deeper into the basement coming up on a section that was hidden with plastic.

Pulling the plastic back revealed what Will knew all along, Tobias was their musician killer. A noise sounded behind him, but before he could react a thick string was put around his head.

Tobias pulled the cello string tightly against the empath's neck, who choked struggling to get away from his attacker. His gun weighed in his hand, without thinking he brought it up and fired.

The pressure around his throat was gone, replaced by a slight sting. His ears ringed from the gunshot. Tobias gripped his ear, blood dripped from his hand. While Will was still dazed, Budge fled the basement.

It took a moment but the empath finally regained his breathing, he knew it was pointless trying to chase after the man. Instead he called Jack, “what did you find?” The man demanded, “he's our guy. However he got away, after killing the two officers and almost me.” Jack was silent, “I'll be there in a moment, stay put.” And like all of Jack's other notorious phone calls, he hung up before Will could talk.

The empath sighed and made his way back upstairs, he felt a small cut on the side of his neck where the string cut in. He waited outside, unable to be in the same building as the two officers he accidentally got killed. That was going to be fun explaining to Jack, he just knew the man was going to give him hell about it.

Thirty minutes later Jack and the rest of the team show up, most of them head inside to deal with the two dead officers, Jack however makes his way over to Will with his arms crossed. “Care to tell me what went down here?”

Will looked down not wanting to meet his gaze or tried to anyways, the man snapped his fingers in front of his face. “I asked you a question Graham, what happened?”

The empath sighed and took his glasses off, “I was asking Tobias questions relating to the case, he said something that sat off suspicion however before I could do anything something outside caught my attention. I excused myself for less than three minutes, when I returned the officers were dead and then Tobias tried to kill me so I shot him in the ear.”

Jack laughed humorously, “you're telling me that a distraction pulled you away from questioning someone that was suspicious from the get-go and because of your ignorance, two officers ended up dead?” Will didn't say anything, he blamed himself already, he didn't need his boss berating him as well.

Jack's phone rang, he gave Will a look before turning away and answering it. He walked away so the empath couldn't hear the conversation, when he hung up Jack walked over his face grim. “There's been an attack at Dr. Lecter's office, it was Tobias Budge.” Panic seized Will’s chest, if Hannibal got hurt because of his stupidity, the empath would never forgive himself.

“We're not finished with our conversation, get in the car.” If it would have been under any other circumstance, Will would have snapped back at the older man. However, because it was Hannibal, the agent said nothing and got in the car.

The drive felt like it was taking forever, a million different ‘what if’s?’ flooded his already frazzled brain. Hannibal must have been the one that called Jack, which meant that the man was alive…but what if he was badly injured to the point where he could die?

He shut that thought down real quick, Hannibal will live, he had to.

At last they arrived at Hannibal's office, it took everything in Will not to jump out before Jack could even put it in park. He followed behind Jack, his strides longer than usual. When they arrived at Hannibal's office, Jack was the first to walk in. Just barely getting a glimpse of the messed up room, had the empath's heart racing.

He followed in behind the older man, his eyes quickly scanning the office before settling on the worried eyes of Hannibal. Both seemed to let out a sigh of relief when they saw one another, Will made his way over to man. The dead body of Tobias Budge was covered by a white sheet, but none of that mattered to Will.

He sat on the edge of the desk, a small smile on his face. "I was worried what I'd find when we got here." The empath admitted, the doctor was a bit beat up but otherwise looked okay. "I was worried about you too, when Tobias said he killed some officers, I thought that included you."

Will felt guilt gnaw at him, "I feel like I dragged you into my world. If I hadn't gotten distracted, then he wouldn't have gotten away…I'm sorry."

Hannibal sighed, brushing a stray curl away from the empath's eye. "I feel better knowing you aren't alone in this violent world, it just means I can keep you safe."

His dark gaze suddenly locked onto a spot on Will's neck, "did he do that?" Hannibal asked, his voice cold. Assuming he meant the tiny cut, the agent nodded, "I shot him in the ear, that's how I got away." There was an indescribable look on the other man's face, one that sent shivers down Will's spin.

Jack walked over a moment later, "looks like you two had a nasty fight. Do you mind telling me what happened Dr. Lecter?" Hannibal nodded, recalling the story.

After the doctor's statement, the scene was cleaned up and Tobias Budge's body was carried out. Will stayed behind with Hannibal not ready to have the man out of his sight, "Hannibal can I have a word with you for a moment?" Jack asked, as he got ready to leave himself. "Of course, what is it?" The head of the BSU shot a look towards Will, then looked back at Hannibal. "I'd like to talk privately."

This time Will did roll his eyes, he let out a scoff, crossing his arms. He knew that he was going to tell Hannibal about how the empath got distracted, something Will already planned to do in the first place.

He must have been too wrapped up in his thoughts, that he didn't even notice when Jack left. "Why don't you stay over at my place tonight darling, I can drop you off at the lab to pick up your car first." It wasn't really a question more like a statement, however the promise of a good night's sleep didn't make him object.

The drive back to the lab was quiet, classical music flowed comfortingly through the car. Will got out once they arrived, "I'll meet you back at the house. I'm sure you'll want to take care of

your dogs, before you head over.” The empath nodded, “I'll call you when I'm on the way.” Hannibal smiled warmly, “drive safe Will, I'll see you in after a while.”

Will made quick work of making his dogs food, while they ran around outside. Exhaustion clouded the empath's mind, he just wanted to sleep curled up in Hannibal's bed.

After all the dogs came in, Will gave each of them a scratch behind the ear before leaving. His thoughts were calm for once as he drove the familiar road to Hannibal's house, he glanced down to turn the radio on, and when he looked up Garrett Jacob Hobbs was in the middle of the road.

He jerked the wheel to avoid hitting him, when he looked back in his rearview mirror the man was gone. His heart hammered in his chest, his hands shook as he gripped the wheel trying to ground himself. He knew it was just his tired mind playing tricks on him, that didn't help settle his nerves though.

Will’s pulse was still racing as he pulled into Hannibal’s driveway. The man on the road—it was just a trick of his tired mind he continued to tell himself, but the uneasiness clung to him like a shadow.

The door opened before he could knock. Hannibal stood there, calm and collected, but there was a subtle warmth in his eyes that immediately began to soothe his frayed nerves.

“I thought I heard you pull in.” The man said, his tone soft. The small smile on his face was quickly replaced by a look of concern, "what's the matter darling? You look as if you've seen a ghost."

Will stepped inside with a small chuckle, "you could say that." The scent of something rich and comforting filled the air. He hadn’t realized how hungry he was until that moment. "I had assumed you hadn't eaten today, so I prepared us a meal."

The empath followed Hannibal to the dining room, where the table was already set and a steaming dinner was waiting for them.

“Sit,” The doctor instructed gently Will did, feeling some of the tension ease from his shoulders simply by being in the other man's presence.

The food was a simple but exquisite dish, the flavors were familiar. Grounding him in the present, away from the haunting visions of the road and the incident from earlier.

After the pair finished dinner, they made their way to the lounge. Hannibal handed Will a small glass, “I made you some tea, it should help you relax.” The empath accepted it gratefully, “thank you.”

It was quiet for a moment, before Hannibal spoke up. “Jack informed me that you got distracted today, I told him I'd talk to you about it.” His tone held no judgment, but it didn't make Will feel any better. He took a sip of his tea, letting the smooth flavors coat his taste buds. “I was planning on telling you today, Jack just beat me to it.”

He sighed, the weight of what he had to say pressing down on him. “I saw something...unusual, I guess you could say."

Hannibal’s gaze remained steady, encouraging without pushing. “What did you see, Will?”

Will hesitated, the words catching in his throat as he tried to make sense of the thing that had started to haunt him. “It was… a creature. A stag, but not like any stag I’ve ever seen. It was made of feathers, almost like it was part bird. I saw it the night before, and again today, when I was questioning Tobias Budge.”

He paused, the memory sharp in his mind, the way the creature had moved, the way it’s presence had pulled him from reality. “It looked so real. It felt like it was trying to tell me something, but I couldn’t…I couldn’t focus. So when it walked away, I followed it, which was a mistake that ended two officers' lives."

Will took another sip of his tea, trying to ground himself, but the taste was muted, his mind still filled with the image of the feathered stag. “And then, on the way here, I saw Garrett Jacob Hobbs, standing in the middle of the road.”

The empath looked up at Hannibal, hoping he'd have some kind of explanation or at least an understanding of what was happening to him. “I know he’s dead, but he was there, as real as you are. I don’t know what’s happening to me.” His voice broke at the end, unable to hide how scared he was that he was finally losing his mind.

Will’s hands trembled, he sat the delicate cup down on the coffee table to avoid dropping it. The visions, the faces of the dead, haunted him every time he closed his eyes. It wasn’t just in his sleep anymore—they were slipping into his waking hours, lurking just out of reach but never far enough to ignore.

The other man watched the empath with a calm, steady gaze. His presence was a stark contrast to the turmoil that raged inside Will’s mind.

“Will,” he began, his voice a soft but firm anchor in the storm of Will’s thoughts, “you are under an immense amount of stress. The cases you’re working on, particularly the Chesapeake Ripper, are taking a significant toll on you.”

Will shook his head, his eyes shut, unable to face Hannibal. “Stress doesn’t explain this,” he whispered, his voice thick with desperation. “I saw Garrett Jacob Hobbs, I know he’s dead because I killed him. But he was right there, and the stag, what is that supposed to mean?"

Hannibal rose slowly, moving to sit closer to the empath. He placed a hand on Will’s shoulder, the gesture gentle and grounding.

“Your mind is powerful, darling. It allows you to see what others cannot, to understand the thoughts and motivations of killers in a way that no one else can. But that same gift can be a curse. When you push yourself too hard, when the line between your empathy and their madness blurs, it can manifest in ways that are frightening.”

Will closed his eyes, leaning into the touch, needing the connection to something or rather someone solid. “It’s not just in my head, Hannibal. It looks real.”

The man's hand tightened slightly, a subtle reminder of his presence. “I know it does. But that’s the exhaustion speaking. Your brain is exhausted, Will. You’ve been running yourself ragged, and it’s beginning to play tricks on you. These visions, these apparitions, they’re your mind’s way of telling you that you need to rest.”

“But what if I can’t?” Will’s voice wavered, “what if it doesn’t stop?”

Hannibal’s gaze was unwavering, his voice as soothing as ever. “Then we will work through it, together. You are not alone in this. Whatever you’re seeing, whatever you’re feeling, you don’t have to face it by yourself. I will help you make sense of it, until you feel in control again."

The doctor's words slowly calmed the empath down, “thank you Hannibal, for everything.”

He smiled, placing a soft kiss on Will's forehead, “of course Will, let's get you to bed now.” He took the man's outstretched hand, then the pair made their way to the room.

Neither man spoke as they dressed for bed, Will laid down his eyes closing as his head hit the pillow. In fact he was so exhausted, that he didn't even feel as a needle was placed into his arm and then swiftly removed

Chapter End Notes

This is the longest chapter I have ever written, I just feel bad for leaving ya'll will short chapters so I hope you enjoy this one!!

I appreciate you all!♡

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

> My thoughts were destroying me, I tried not to think but the silence was a killer too. - Unknown
>
> EDIT AGAIN!- I am so sorry for the confusion, the chapter got all messed I guess because I posted right before A03 shut down, hopefully I got it fixed this time.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will stirred in the early hours of the morning, the haze of sleep still heavy on his mind. His thoughts were sluggish, like trying to wade through thick mud, and he was disoriented by the darkness that surrounded him.

Instinctively he turned on his side reaching for Hannibal, it took him a moment to realize that the space beside him in bed was empty. The sheets were cool to the touch, indicating Hannibal had been gone for some time.

Confusion gnawed at Will, but it was as if his brain couldn't quite catch up with his body. Why wasn't Hannibal there? The empath looked at the clock, blinking trying to clear his vision, and saw that it was only four in the morning.

The thought lingered, struggling to take root in his muddled mind. Pushing himself out of bed, he swayed slightly, the world tilting as he found his balance. His limbs felt heavy like they weren't entirely his own.

Will made his way downstairs, each step deliberate and slow. The house was eerily quiet, the kind of silence that pressed in on him, making his head throb as he struggled to stay upright. When he reached the bottom, he saw a soft light spilling out from the kitchen.

Hannibal was standing at the counter, his back to the doorway. The faint chop of a knife was the only sound he heard, slowly Will approached.

The man turned around just as the empath leaned against the island trying to stay upright, the doctor's expression schooled into one of serene calm. But there was a flicker of something—shock, perhaps that Hannibal quickly buried beneath a mask of concern.

"Will," Hannibal's voice was gentle, almost soothing, as he crossed the room to meet him. "You should be resting, it's still early."

The profiler blinked, trying to clear the fog from his thoughts, but it clung to him stubbornly. “I—” he started, then paused, unsure of what he was even trying to say. Something felt off, but he couldn’t quite place it.

“You’re exhausted,” the man continued, his hands resting on Will’s shoulders, guiding him back towards the stairs. “Come, let’s get you back to bed. You need to give that clever mind of yours a rest, before work later."

Will allowed himself to be led, his resistance minimal as Hannibal’s words wrapped around him like a blanket. Whatever unease he felt was muffled, buried under layers of fatigue. He glanced up at the doctor’s face, noting the smooth calmness in his features.

His partner smiled, a small curve of his lips as he helped the empath back into bed. “Rest now,” he murmured, sinking onto the bed, carding his fingers through Will's hair. "I won't leave you alone again, I promise."

Will’s eyes fluttered closed, the heaviness pulling him under once again. But just before he slipped back into a blissful slumber, a distant thought floated to the surface of his mind, too faint to fully grasp.

What had Hannibal been doing downstairs at this hour?

^^^

Sunlight poured through the open curtains, blinding the poor empath as he woke up. Will shielded his eyes, blinking away the sleep that coated his vision. “Good morning Will, I brought you some breakfast.”

The empath sat up to look at Hannibal who was holding a tray in his hands, Will flashed him a tired smile. “Thank you.” The man tilted his head, setting the tray down. “You should eat quickly, uncle Jack has been blowing your phone up all morning.”

That soured his mood instantly, but he said nothing. The food as always was delicious, however it did very little to help his mood.

By the time Will was done showering and getting ready, it was well past eight in the morning. He cursed under his breath, knowing that Jack was going to be pissed by the time he arrived. “I should probably get going before Crawford bites my head off, I'll stop by your office on my way home.”

Hannibal gave a slight nod, “you know you're more than welcomed to stay here tonight.”

Will sighed, trying to find the right words to say. "I don’t want to trouble you any more than I already have." He finally answered, forcing himself to meet the man’s eyes.

The doctor’s gaze softened. "It’s no trouble at all, Will. Besides, I'd be more at ease knowing you’re resting properly.” That settled some of the profiler’s nerves, he nodded some. “I'll think about it, and get back to you.” He settled on, that seemed to appease Hannibal as he kissed Will’s forehead. “Alright darling, I'll see you later this evening.”

^^^

Will made his way to Jack's office slowly not wanting to face the man just yet, “you might want to prepare yourself before going in there.” A voice piped up as his hand hovered over the doorknob, he turned to see Beverly heading towards him. The empath huffed out a laugh, “how bad of a mood is he in?”

It was her turn to laugh, “compared to his usual bad attitude, I'd say it's unbearable.”

Will took his glasses off, scrubbing his hand down his face. “Great, well thanks for the warning.” Beverly nodded a small smile on her face, “anytime. We gotta look out for each other here, am I right?” He managed a smile back, “I suppose.”

Katz straightened up, “you should probably get in there.” The empath slipped his glasses back on, “right.” Just as she was about to walk away, she turned around. “Take care of yourself Will, don't let him push you around.” And then she was gone.

Will took a moment to prepare himself for the onslaught, then he walked in. “I'm getting real sick of you ignoring my calls Graham, sit down we need to have a talk.”

The empath didn't even get a chance to sit fully, before Jack honed in on him.

“What the hell is going on with you? You’ve been sloppy—making mistakes that I shouldn’t have to clean up.”

Will clenched his jaw, his fingers tightening around the armrests of his chair. “I’m doing the best I can, Jack."

The older man leaned forward, his eyes narrowing. “Your ‘best’ isn’t good enough. You’ve been distracted, careless. How many times are we supposed to cover for you before something slips through the cracks and we lose more than two officers because of it?”

Will’s gaze faltered, the guilt of his mistake still lingered. "It’s been...difficult here lately, with all the cases and-"

"Difficult?" Jack scoffed, cutting him off, as sat back in his chair with a look of disdain. "Difficult doesn’t cut it when people’s lives are on the line. You’re supposed to be the best at this, Will but lately, I’m seeing nothing but mistakes."

The empath could feel his own anger about to burst. However, he knew it would do no good snapping back. Instead, he let out a frustrated sigh, "I'll work on it Jack, I'm sorry." The last two words were spat out, as if they left a bad taste on his tongue.

The agent scowled, “see to it that you do Graham.” After that Will stood, ready to leave the tension behind. However, it appeared that Jack wasn't done with his tantrum just yet.

“I'm not finished yet, sit back down.” The empath bit his lip hard enough that he tasted iron, he sat back down. Crawford still had the cold gaze as before, which clashed with his fiery attitude.

“I want to ask you about Abigail Hobbs, she’s been acting…off. Like she’s hiding something. What is she not telling me?”

Will’s heart pounded in his chest. The thought of Abigail being under Jack’s scrutiny filled him with dread. He had worked so hard to protect her, to keep her safe from the prying eyes of those who would judge her. And now, the older man was coming after her.

“Abigail’s fine,” Will said, his tone firm. “She’s been through a lot, but she’s coping. She doesn't need you breathing down her neck either."

“Don’t lie to me, Will!” Jack snapped, slamming his hand on the desk. “You think I haven’t noticed how she avoids eye contact, how she stammers when I ask her simple questions? Something’s not right, and you know it.”

The profiler clenched his fists, fighting to keep his temper in check. “She’s traumatized, Jack. You can’t expect her to be perfectly fine after everything that’s happened."

“Are you covering for her?” Jack’s voice was venomous now, his eyes narrowed in suspicion. “I’ve seen the way you are with her, you’re too close, too protective."

Will’s patience snapped. “Maybe it's because I feel guilty for killing her father, but she’s a victim, not a suspect!”

Jack stood up, his expression hard. “You’re letting your emotions cloud your judgment. Again, you’re sloppy Graham. And if you don’t get it together, you’re going to take us all down with you.”

The empath scoffed standing as well, "I have a class to teach." With that he left, slamming the door behind him.

^^^

Will was still fuming by the time he finished his lecture, he was too busy slamming things into his bag that he didn't notice someone walked in. “Tough lecture it seems?” He nearly jumped out of his skin, looking up to meet the eyes of Alana Bloom.

He chuckled dryly, “you could say that.” The empath slung his bag over his shoulder, “Jack informed me of his conversation with you this morning, want to talk about it?” She asked, sounding as if she genuinely cared.

Will ran a tired hand through his curls, “not particularly. I'd like to forget about it, if at all possible.” The psychiatrist moved closer, “you know I'm on your side correct? I believe Abigail is innocent, I've just been trying to convince him of her innocence.”

“Good luck with that, there is no convincing Jack.” Alana crossed her arms leaning against the wall, “well I can certainly try. Are you heading home now?”

He shook his head, “I uh have a meeting with Dr. Lecter in a few minutes.” A small smile flashed across her face, “I'm glad you're talking to him Will, it seems to be doing some good for you.”

The empath wasn't sure what that was supposed to mean, so he just brushed it off. “I should get going, I'll see you tomorrow Dr. Bloom.” He walked out, without another word.

It was nearing sundown by the time Will arrived at Hannibal's office, he made his way inside and sat in the waiting room, his leg bouncing in agitation.

After a couple minutes the door opened, and Hannibal walked out with one of his patients. He flashed a small smile Will's way, before turning the patient and talking to them.

Once they were inside, the doctor sat in his usual chair. However Will stood, pacing the length of the floor. Hannibal tilted his head, “is something troubling you Will?”

That was the fuel to the flame, Jack's passed words flooded his brain. “Jack called me into his office today, it wasn't a pleasant conversation.”

Hannibal waved him on to continue, so for the next ten minutes, Will ranted on about what all Jack had said to him. Throughout the conversation, the man's eye would twitch, however the profiler was too caught up in his rant to notice.

The doctor leaned forward in his chair, his voice steady and soothing. “Jack’s words are designed to provoke a reaction, to put you on the defensive. It’s a tactic meant to destabilize you. But you mustn’t let his anger dictate your state of mind.”

Will struggled to hold onto his composure, as he all but collapsed in the chair opposite of Hannibal.“I can’t help but think that maybe he’s right. Maybe I am slipping.”

The man shook his head, his tone firm but gentle. “You are under an immense amount of pressure, Will. This is a challenging time, but it doesn’t define your capabilities or your worth. You need to focus on your work, not on the criticisms that aim to undermine you.”

Will sighed, “it's just getting harder to see clearly. I don't know what's wrong, but it's getting increasingly difficult to get into the killer’s mind.”

Hannibal regarded the empath with a measured expression, his voice insistent. "Perhaps what you need, darling, is a break. Time away from the darkness could do wonders for your mind. It may allow you to see clearly again."

Will shook his head, his tone holding no room for argument. "I can't, Hannibal. I save lives, I can't just step away because it's getting hard."

The man's gaze lingered on him, unreadable, as if contemplating something deeper, but he simply nodded in response. "As you wish, Will. But do remember, even the brightest minds need rest.”

Hannibal's eyes observed the empath, “is there something else troubling you?” He asked concerned, Will scrubbed his hands against his legs. “Jack thinks Abigail is hiding

something, and he believes I've gotten too close to realize it.” He paused trying to gather the right words, “do you think he's right?”

The doctor’s expression remained serene, his gaze never wavering from Will’s. "Abigail is not her father, Will," he said, his voice steady, "whatever Jack believes, it is born from suspicion, not fact. You know Abigail, her struggles, her fears. She trusts you, and you trust her. That is something Jack cannot understand." There was a brief pause as Hannibal tilted his head slightly, his eyes softening. "Do you believe she is hiding something?”

Will hesitated before answering, “I believe she is just traumatized.” He began, “she lived through something no kid should ever have to experience.”

Hannibal inclined his head,”if you are certain of her innocence, you must defend it with all you have. Allowing Jack's doubts to take root, will only cause your mind to spiral further.”

He let those words sink in, however something didn't feel right.

Something in Hannibal's tone set off alarm bells, he sounded…persistent in Abigail's defense. Like he was trying to convince both himself and Will that the girl was innocent, but why?

There was also his posture, the normally proper and relaxed man. Had slowly become more rigid as the two talked, however before Will could think anymore into it, Hannibal spoke up.

“Have you decided where you'll be staying tonight?” The empath snapped out of his thoughts, “if it's no trouble, could I stay with you?”

Hannibal smiled, “it's no trouble at all. I'll have dinner ready by the time you get there, go take care of your dogs.”

^^^

Will entered his home, the quiet comfort of his sanctuary greeting him as the dogs rushed forward to meet him. He offered them each a gentle pat on the head before heading into the kitchen to prepare their dinner.

His movements were automatic, each step a part of a familiar routine, though his mind was elsewhere, caught in the haze of a day that had left him more drained than usual.

As he reached for one of the bowls, a sharp sting suddenly shot through his arm. Startled, the empath dropped the bowl he was holding, the clatter of metal against the floor echoing in the quiet room.

He quickly rolled up his sleeve to inspect the area, only to find a small puncture wound surrounded by a faint bruise. The sight of it made him freeze.

His thoughts raced as he tried to recall when or how he might have gotten the injury, but nothing came to mind. It was as though it had appeared out of nowhere. The bruise looked fresh, but there was no memory, no incident that could explain it.

Will frowned, running his fingers over the spot, wincing slightly at the tenderness. The dogs nudged at him, urging him to continue with their meal, but his focus remained on the small wound. Where did it come from?

He shook his head, forcing himself to finish feeding his dogs, though the unsettling feeling lingered. He couldn't shake the unease, the nagging suspicion that something was wrong, but for now, he pushed it to the back of his mind, telling himself he would figure it out later.

But deep down, he knew this was something he couldn’t just brush off.

As he was washing the dishes he used, a memory surfaced out of nowhere. It was fuzzy, however he had the vague recollection of someone injected him with an unknown liquid.

The profiler tried to brush it off as just being tired, but with the puncture wound on his arm, it couldn't have been coincidence.

There was only one person Will could think of who had been close enough to drug him, and the very thought twisted his stomach and weighed heavily on his heart. Hannibal had both the expertise and the experience to carry out such an act, but why would he do it to him?

Chapter End Notes

Heyyy I hope you enjoy this chapter, and if you didn't feel free to tell me what you think!

There will only be a couple more chapters left, so be on the look out for those. I appreciate you all for dealing my inconsistent posting, you all rock!♡♡

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

> "The saddest thing about betrayal is that it never comes from your enemies." - Unknown
>
> ⚠️TW!! VOMITING AND HUMAN REMAINS(Kinda), THOUGHTS ABOUT UNREQUITED DRUGGING READ AT YOUR OWN RISK!!⚠️

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A wave of delicious aromas hit Will once he entered Hannibal's home, shrugging off his coat, he hung it and made his way to the dining room.

The man had just placed a steaming dish down when he noticed Will, he flashed him a small smile. "You made it just in time, have a seat." The empath made his way over to his usual chair, his thoughts still on the mysterious puncture wound.

"What's on tonight's menu?" He asked, trying to keep his voice steady. Hannibal diligently filled Will's plate, "filet mignon with red wine reduction, paired with truffle mashed potatoes." The empath nodded with a smile of his own, "it looks amazing as usual."

The tension in the room was different compared to other dinners, Will sat across from Hannibal, pushing the food around his plate with his fork more than he was eating it. The flicker of candlelight cast soft shadows on Hannibal's face, his expression calm but his eyes sharp, watching the empath closely.

"You're not yourself tonight," Hannibal observed, setting down his utensils, his focus fully on Will. "What's troubling you?"

Will blinked, pulling himself out of his thoughts, his grip tightening around the fork. He had been so lost in his head, that he hadn't even registered the question at first. His mind kept circling back to his arm, unwilling to let go of the suspicion gnawing at him.

"It's nothing" the empath finally muttered, but the words lacked conviction. His gaze dropped to his plate, avoiding Hannibal's piercing stare.

The man leaned forward slightly, "I think we both know that isn't true."

WIll sighed knowing it was pointless to try and lie, he sat his fork down before meeting Hannibal's gaze. "Earlier when I was feeding my dogs, I felt a sharp pain in my arm. When I looked, there was a small puncture wound in the crook of my arm. I have no idea how it got there, or what could have possibly done that."

He purposely left his suspicions out, Will tried to look for any signs on Hannibal's face, however the man showed nothing. "Perhaps you brushed against something sharp, and in the heightened state of adrenaline, you simply failed to notice the injury until much later."

His voice didn't betray anything either, Will wasn't convinced though. "But why only there? If I brushed against something sharp, I'd like to think I would have much more than a singular puncture wound."

There was a miniscule twitch of Hannibal's eye, "you are overthinking this Will. Given your line of work, it is only natural to want to assume the worst in any situation." He picked up his fork and resumed eating, "finish your dinner before it gets cold."

His tone left no room for argument, which only made Will's suspicion grow. Not wanting to upset the man, he pushed his thoughts aside and continued eating.

The empath helped Hannibal with the dishes after the pair finished dinner, "would you like some tea to help ease your mind?" Will thought for a moment, that could possibly help him relax. "I suppose that wouldn't hurt, thank you."

The man kissed the top of his head as he passed to get the kettle, "have you given any more thought at taking a break?" He asked, filling the kettle up with water. Will mulled over it for a moment, "I don't think I could take a break." He began running a hand through his curls, "one Jack wouldn't like it and two, I won't be able to rest until the ripper is stopped."

Hannibal hummed turning to face him once the tea was started, "the choice isn't up to Jack. If you continue to push yourself, your mind may not recover."

Will didn't respond, until the other made his way over and lifted his chin. "I only wish to protect you darling, your mind is so delicate and intricate. That it teeters on the edge of fragility, if you push yourself further, there may come a point where it cannot be restored once it shatters."

A whistling sound caught both of their attention, "go sit down and I'll bring you some tea."

Once again his tone held no room for argument, so Will made his way to the lounge as his thoughts spiraled. What if Hannibal drugged his tea? Surely he wouldn't, however he was already suspicious enough.

Hannibal walked in a moment later, two cups of steaming tea in his hands. He handed the empath one, which he accepted with a smile. "I purchased this specifically for you, it is an herbal tea. Consisting of passionflower, which is known to calm the mind and reduce anxiety."

Will took a tentative sip, allowing the flavors to mingle. The doctor sat beside him, sipping his own tea. "I called Jack while I was in the kitchen." He stated, nearly causing the empath to choke. Regaining his composure, he looked at Hannibal. "Why?"

"I knew you wouldn't ask for a break yourself, so I told him that you would not be coming in." He held his hand up, stopping Will from complaining. "It is only for a couple of days

Will, I told him your mind needed a rest.”

The empath sat the cup down, a flash of irritation crossing his face. “You decided that for me?” His voice was sharp, “that is not your choice to make."

Hannibal met his gaze steadily, unruffled by his anger. “It is for your own good” he said, his tone soothing but firm. “You push yourself too much darling, this will be good for you."

Deep down Will knew Hannibal was right, however he saved lives. He couldn't do that while being stuck at home, “let me solve the Ripper case and I promise I'll take a break.”

Hannibal shook his head, “I'm afraid the decision has already been made Will, drink your tea.”

Will wanted to keep arguing, he was a grown man and he could make his own decisions. Then his mind flashed back to the puncture wound on his arm, the vague outline of a person injecting him. If his suspicions were true about Hannibal doing that to him, it wouldn't be wise to anger him.

He finished his tea in silence, afterwards the two made their way upstairs. Will hopped in the shower, letting the warm water flow over him. The pleasant heat, paired with the tea made him feel relaxed.

Once the two were ready for bed, they crawled under the covers. Will made himself comfortable against Hannibal’s side, who began to play with his hair. “I'm sorry for getting upset earlier, I know you're just trying to help.”

A gentle kiss was placed against his temple, “no need to apologize. Your anger was justified, I shouldn't have made that decision for you. If you wish to continue working, that is your choice.”

The empath was silent for a moment, “I guess a couple of days won't hurt anything.”

Hannibal didn't answer, pretty soon Will felt his eyes begin to flutter. Next thing he knew, the world went black.

^^^

Will jolted awake, his heart hammering, his curls clinging to his forehead with sweat. This was unusual, he never had nightmares when he stayed with Hannibal. Why was this time different?

After calming himself down, he glanced over at the clock. 3:35am glared back at him, the empath was so caught up in his panic, that he didn't even notice that the other man wasn't in bed.

This was the second night in a row that he had woken up to an empty bed, a sense of dread washed over him as he stood up making his way out of the room.

Hannibal had been in the kitchen the last time, however this time he was nowhere to be seen. The door to the pantry was opened, confused Will made his way over.

There wasn't anything out of the ordinary, so the empath left. He continued his search for Hannibal, the feeling of dread became stronger with each empty room he checked.

He had just been on the verge of giving up, when the man suddenly appeared behind him. “Will, are you alright?” He jumped, turning around to face him.

“I had a nightmare, then you weren't in bed so I went looking for you.” Hannibal had come from the kitchen, but that couldn't have been right because that's where Will checked first and he wasn't there.

“I didn't mean to alarm you, a patient called about an emergency. I didn't want to wake you, so I went down to the lounge.”

That was a lie, the empath had just come from there and like all the other rooms it was empty. Instead of confronting him, Will simply nodded. “Is everything alright with your patient?” He asked, trying to keep his voice neutral.

“He is fine, it was nothing but a mere scare on his part, let's head back to bed shall we?”

Will allowed Hannibal to lead him back upstairs, there was a nagging feeling that something was wrong. As they laid back down, Will felt the ropes of sleep pull him back under. Tomorrow he'd find out what Hannibal was hiding from him, he had a feeling he wouldn't like the outcome either.

^^^

The next time the empath woke up, the sun was shining. He sat up with a stretch, looking over at the empty space beside him. A note was leaning against the lamp, his name written on the front.

Putting his glasses on, he read over the note.

‘I hate to leave before you have woken up, however an emergency has come up that demands my attention. Breakfast is in the oven for you, I should be home around noon. If you need me, please don't hesitate to call me.’

Will folded the note back up, before getting up. It was still relatively early in the day, so he had plenty of time to look around for anything out of place.

Just as the note said, there was food in the oven. He ate quickly, trying to come up with a plan. He'd check the kitchen first then the pantry since the door was opened last night.

He made quick work of checking all the cabinets and drawers, nothing but basic utensils stared back at him.

Next was the pantry, he scanned everything, becoming increasingly frustrated when he saw nothing useful. Just as he was about to give up, something caught his eye. There was a wine

bottle that at first glance looked normal, upon further inspection Will saw that was not the case.

His heart pounded as he reached out and pulled it, a small door slowly swung open. He pushed it open the rest of the way, staring at the stairs that led down to the unknown. Something was off about this, Will started down the steps but froze. What if this was a trap? Hannibal could be down there waiting for Will, with God knows what down there.

Taking a breath to steel his nerves, the empath continued. There was a light switch at the bottom, which he flicked on. The sight before him, made his heart drop.

There were plastic tarps hanging from the ceiling, obscuring his vision. With a shaky hand, he pulled one back. A metal table sat in the middle, a drain directly underneath it. Will stared in horror at the rows of equipment hanging on the walls, a freezer chest sat against the back wall.

Taking a small step towards it, he paused trying to prepare himself for what he'd see in there. After a long pause, he opened the chest. Meat filled the majority of the space, not just any meat either.

His breath picked up as he continued to stare at what looked to be kidneys, previous lectures flashed through his mind. “He's eating them…” He whispered quietly, echoing what he said about the Ripper.

Slamming it shut, he felt his stomach clench. If Hannibal had been cooking with the meat in the freezer, that meant that Will had…he didn't have time to finish that thought, as he doubled over retching painfully.

It took a minute before he was able to stop, this whole time the FBI had been looking for the Ripper, and he had been just an arms length away.

He needed to confront Hannibal, before getting Jack involved. Backing out of the basement he turned to head back up the stairs, he suddenly stopped. His breath caught in his throat, standing at the bottom of the stairs was the Chesapeake Ripper himself.

"You’ve always had a dangerous curiosity Will," Hannibal's voice was chilling, devoid of warmth. His gaze darkened, carrying a menace Will had never seen before. "Now, tell me...what do you think should be done about that?”

Chapter End Notes

I finally have a chapter out!! I hope you enjoy this one, and sadly there is only one chapter left in this story.

Feel free to tell me what you think in the comments!! I appreciate you all for putting up with me♡♡

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

> "I've always assumed that love is a dangerous disadvantage. Thank you for the final proof." - Series Sherlock Holmes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will’s heart pounded, fear, anger, and betrayal coursed through his veins as he stared at Hannibal. “You're the Chesapeake Ripper” he spoke softly, not wanting to believe it. “You've been right in front of us this whole time.”

Hannibal's lips curled in a smile, “and yet here you are confronting me…alone.” He took a single step forward, his eyes gleaming with something dangerous. “Tell me, Will, are you afraid?”

He took a shaky breath, willing himself to stay rooted in place. He wasn't going to give Hannibal the satisfaction of seeing his fear, “I know you won't kill me.” He stated, sounding braver than he felt. A soft chuckle escaped the man's lips, as he began circling the empath. A predator stalking its prey, right before the pounce.

“What makes you so sure?” The Ripper stopped just behind Will, standing close enough that his rich aftershave burned his nose. Every instinct in the empath screamed at him to run, sweat gathered in the creases of his brows.

Honestly Will wasn't entirely sure that Hannibal wouldn't kill him however, there's no telling how long the man was standing on the stairs before the empath turned around. He could have struck at any moment, but he chose not to, despite being capable enough to do so. “You would have done it while my back was turned, I was vulnerable so it would have been the perfect moment to attack."

Hannibal chuckled darkly, the hairs on the back of Will's neck stood up as the man spoke directly in his ear. “You truly are observant darling, that's what drew me to you in the first place.” The empath breathed a sigh of relief as the man backed away, “your mind is a beautiful weapon, one I intended to use for myself.”

The man entered his field of vision once more, basking in the fear that Will was trying desperately to keep hidden. He swiped his tongue across dry lips, the bitter taste of vomit lingered. “What was the purpose of you drugging me?” Hannibal raised an eyebrow, speaking almost mockingly. “I’m sure you know the answer to that Will, I just praised your

intelligence—don’t make me take it back.” He leaned back against the freezer, body relaxed and eyes locked in on Will.

The empath on the other hand stood rigid, body poised and tensed ready to make a run for it if necessary. He knew escape was pointless, but going down without a fight wasn't an option. Hannibal cleared his throat, waiting for an answer. Will met the Ripper's gaze, “you wanted me unaware of your…extracurricular activities.”

Hannibal inclined his head. “It seems, however, that your body grew used to the effects.” Pushing himself off the freezer, he walked over to the wall of various tools, giving Will the chance to creep silently toward the stairs. His steps were light, his breath shallow, and it took every ounce of restraint not to bolt. Just as he froze, Hannibal’s voice continued, casual and unbothered. “I suppose it’s my fault you’re in this mess at all. Had I alternated the sedatives, you’d still be blissfully unaware.”

He kept his back turned to the empath, who in a sudden surge of confidence spoke up. “Who would have thought the great Chesapeake Ripper would meet his end due to a mistake?”

Hannibal went rigid, hand hovering over a tool that Will couldn’t name. For a second the empath felt a wave of triumph wash over him, the Ripper was a man of ego and pride, it felt gratifying to land a dig right where it hurt.

That triumph quickly turned to cold hard fear, as Hannibal turned to face him. The dark eyes that Will once found warm and comforting, were now hardened into something dangerous. The empath felt ice in his veins, his heart seemingly stopped beating as the man took a step towards him, forcing Will back.

This man, the one who stood before him now, was stripped completely of his person suit. The Chesapeake Ripper stood exposed, as all his victims must have seen him. “And what my darling Will, do you consider my end?”

Will opened his mouth however no words came out, the only coherent thought he had was ‘RUN!’ He shifted slightly towards the stairs, the tiny movement caught Hannibal's attention. The Ripper’s lips twitched with a smile, “go ahead and try Will. I assure you, that you won't make it far.”

It wasn't a threat but a promise, they both knew he wouldn't even make it from his spot on the floor before Hannibal would strike. He needed to get this under control so he could send a message to Jack, but how?

His phone felt heavy in his pocket, Will had two options, he could either risk it and try to send a message to Jack. However Hannibal could easily keep him from doing that, or he could attack the man, buying him some time to get in contact with Jack.

Neither option was ideal, and both could go horribly wrong. But the second option had the most potential to work. Blue eyes scanned the room for anything nearby he could use as a weapon. Finding nothing, he cursed under his breath. Hands only—it would have to be. He’d just have to use the element of surprise to his advantage.

“What was your plan for me?” Will asked, trying to reel in his fear, for his plan to work he needed to calm down. Hannibal's eyes twinkled, giving the empath a sense of dread.

He took a step towards Will, his hand outstretched as he caressed the agent's face. His touch burned, leaving behind a trail of fire as skilled fingers traced his jawline, before forcing his chin up. “That depends” Hannibal finally answered, his thumb rubbing against Will's bottom lip. It took everything in him, not to lean into the once loving touch. “How much do you want to know?”

Will's eyes never left Hannibal's, the fear slowly melting away for anger to take place. “All of it.”

Something akin to satisfaction crossed Hannibal's face, his hand trailed down from the empath's chin to his throat. Will's breath shuddered, knowing that at anypoint Hannibal could end him where he stood. “All of it?” He echoed, nimble fingers toyed with a racing pulse point. “Are you sure?”

The empath swallowed thickly, “no” he admitted. “But I want to know how much of what we were was true.”

The Ripper closed the distance between the two, his cold hand never leaving Will's throat. “Truth is a particular thing darling” Hannibal murmured, his gaze bore into Will’s as if waiting to see if he'd back down. “I'm aware, but I need to know.”

Hannibal's grin rivaled the Cheshire cat's, he withdrew his hand, allowing Will to breath a little easier. “Always the stubborn one you are.” He sighed, crossing his hands behind his back, as if trying to appear non-threatening.

“Everything that has happened between us was genuine, I cared about you Will — I still care about you. However the truth is what you want, so it was your empathy, your mind that I loved more.”

That hit Will like a slap to the face, he was expecting to not like what Hannibal had to say. He was used to people only caring for him when his empathy was involved, but to hear it from the man he had come to love. Somehow it stung a lot more, tears gathered in the corner of his eyes, but he refused to let them fall.

“I was just a weapon you could wield, you never saw me as a person or an equal.” His voice wavered as he continued, “you saw what you could take, and what you could bend to your will.” He let out a watery chuckle, “and to say that you care…you're incapable of caring for someone, not without a price.”

Hannibal hummed tilting his head, “I suppose that may be true. I never saw you as an equal, because I was helping you become my equal.”

Will must have looked confused, because Hannibal continued the same twinkle in his eyes as before. “Your ability allows you to see the worst parts of God's creation, you become the killers you seek to catch rather you're aware of it or not. You feed off that darkness you keep under lock and key."

The Ripper moved close enough to whisper in the agent's ear. “You *crave* the dark, it was my intention to help you realize that.”

Will's mind was moving about a hundred miles a minute, until suddenly everything clicked into place. Past conversations where the two would stay up until all hours of the night discussing the Ripper cases, there had been times where Hannibal said things that sounded… out of place at the time, things that Will just brushed off as him being exhausted and stressed over the case.

However, now that he knew the truth, he realized Hannibal was giving him the answers to all his questions on a silver platter.

“You wanted me to find out the truth.” He stated, when Hannibal neither confirmed nor denied his accusation, Will continued. “Obviously not in the way it had happened, you wanted to be in control of when and how I uncovered the truth.”

The man smiled as if Will had just granted his most prized wish, “right as ever darling. Though I must admit, the look of fear on your face was positively delicious when you realized just what kind of mess you were tangled in.”

Will's eye caught the freezer in the corner of the room, his stomach twisted painfully at the reminder of its contents. “You fed me-” He choked on the words, but forced them out after a second's hesitation. “Human meat didn't you? As a way to place some part of you, inside of me.” His voice sounded raw, laden with all the emotions he wished to express but couldn't.

Hannibal's expression was devoid of any emotion, “I was testing to see how observant you were. Besides, if you ate the evidence, you'd be forced to keep the secret—to keep me.”

The empath's stomach churned, bile rising in his throat but he pushed it down. “You're sick.”

The Ripper walked behind Will, blocking his path to the stairs. A hand was placed on his shoulder, as Hannibal leaned forward. “Darling, you sit high on your throne of morality.” The hand dropped down to his waist, pulling him flush against the man's chest. His voice dropped to a dangerous whisper, “but what is the point of being righteous when in the end, you're just as twisted as I am?”

Something inside Will snapped, he grabbed the arm around his waist, voice full of venom. “I am *nothing* like you.”

In a quick motion, he brought his arm back and elbowed Hannibal in the gut. The man grunted in pain, however, didn't let go of Will. He twisted under the arm holding him, and kicked him back away from the stairs.

Hannibal stumbled, but quickly recovered. He slowly turned to face the agent, his eyes blown wide and black with something almost feral. If Will thought he looked dangerous earlier, he looked downright murderous now. “Oh Will.” His accent was thick, “if only you saw things my way.”

The empath wasted no time, he bolted up the stairs, adrenaline coursing through him. He fumbled for his phone as he ran through the kitchen, his gun was upstairs he just had to reach it, before the Ripper reached him.

He heard the quiet steps of Hannibal behind him, it was then he realized that this was just a game to the man. He knew he'd catch Will, he just enjoyed the chase.

He made it upstairs to the bedroom, when Jack answered the phone. “What is it Gra-”

“Hannibal is the Ripper! You have to get to his house now!” His eyes scanned the room, heart pounding as he searched desperately for his gun.

Jack's voice was tense. “Slow down, what do you mean Dr. Lecter is the Ripper?”

Will cursed, he knew he put it in the room, but where was it? The footsteps stopped outside of the room, “looking for this?” Time seemed to stop as the empath turned around, there hanging from Hannibal's finger was his gun.

“You didn't think I'd leave this laying around before I confronted you, hang up the phone darling.” Crawford was all but yelling in his ear, but Will drowned him out when the gun clicked.

“I’m not one to use a gun, however if you do not hang up the phone that will change.”

Will’s breaths were coming out in puffs as he stared at the barrel of the gun, “keep him distracted, I'm on my way.” Was the only thing the agent heard before the other end went silent, he pulled the phone away from his ear, reluctantly placing it in Hannibal's waiting hand.

He just had to stall until Jack and the others could get here, he just hoped it was soon.

“Now why did you have to go and get Uncle Jack involved?” The Ripper slipped Will's phone into his pocket, “if he dies darling, that's on you.”

The empath's voice wavered as he forced himself to speak, the raw pain in his eyes betraying his composure. "I trusted you," he murmured, afraid that if he spoke any louder, he might break.

Hannibal tilted his head, Will could have sworn he saw a flicker of guilt pass before his expression went blank once more. “Trust is a delicate thing Will, place it in the hands of the right person and that trust will flourish.” He lowered the gun, since they both knew who had the upper hand.

“However, place it in the hands of the wrong person, and that trust could be broken only to be reborn into that person's image.”

The empath closed his eyes trying to reel himself back in, “what happens now?” He asked softly, knowing that the answer wasn't one he'd like. “I don't want to kill you.” Hannibal murmured, voice almost regretful.

“However I'm afraid you gave me no choice.”

He jolted as Hannibal cupped his face, thumbs brushing away stray tears that slipped out. Slowly he opened his eyes, if he was going to die, he wanted to face his killer head-on.

“Just get it over with.” He whispered, Hannibal smiled sadly, carding his fingers through tangled curls. “As you wish.”

Time seemed to slow down, as Hannibal's hand moved towards something hidden in his suit jacket. Will's pulse quickened every nerve on edge, anticipating what might come next. Before anything could happen, the door downstairs crashed open, and Jack's booming voice carried up the stairs. Will's eyes flicked hopefully to the doorway just behind the Ripper as multiple sets of footsteps thundered up the steps.

"Drop the knife, Dr. Lecter," Jack commanded. At first Hannibal didn't listen, his dark eyes remained on Will. “Listen to him Hannibal…it's over.”

The agent held his breath as Hannibal leaned forward, his voice quiet enough for only Will to hear. "You can try to distance yourself, darling, pretend I’m contained. However, let it be known that no cell can restrain me forever. When I come for you, it will be *inevitable*"

The knife clattered to the ground, two officers grabbed the Ripper by his arms handcuffing them. The empath stared in disbelief as Hannibal was forced downstairs, he released the breath he was holding once the man was out of sight.

Jack made his way over to Will, “are you alright?” He asked, placing his hand on his shoulder. The empath nodded, “I'm fine, I just can't believe the Chesapeake Ripper was that close this whole time.”

The older man chuckled, patting his back, “it's always the ones you least expected. Come on let's get you home, you've had enough excitement for one day.”

^^^

The drive home felt surreal, not even hours ago he had been kissing death, now he was home, forced to go about his life as if it hadn't all changed in a matter of minutes.

He fed the dogs, ate whatever crappy tv dinner he had left, and sat outside while the dogs ran around. It was strange, he should be ecstatic that the Ripper was behind bars where he belonged.

Instead he just felt hollow, the only person Will had in his life was a killer who was just using him. Now the empath was alone, well besides his dogs of course. He laughed brokenly, unable to stop himself, tears filled his eyes but he wasn't going to scrub them away again. Instead he let them fall, the wave of emotions he'd been holding back, broke through the dam.

He screamed out his frustrations until his throat felt raw, sobs racked his body as every memory with Hannibal flashed by. Every single one of them now tainted, it was all just an illusion. No one cared or loved him, he was incapable of being loved, he was just a tool for people to use, only to be discarded once he'd served his purpose.

Once his sobs had quieted down, he felt exhausted. One whistle had the dogs running back inside, as if on autopilot the empath got ready for bed, and laid down.

Hannibal's words echoed in Will's mind as he drifted into a restless sleep. He knew that cell wouldn't hold the man forever. He had to be prepared. When Hannibal broke out, he would come looking for him—and that was why Will needed to find him first.

Chapter End Notes

Here it is the final chapter for this story, sorry it came out so late. I had it fully finished at the end of October, however as I was reading it over, I realized that it sounded very...cringy I guess. It just wasn't something I felt good about posting, so I re-wrote it and took my time because you all deserve the best for putting up with my inconsistency.

I hope you all enjoy, and I will be working on the next story soon so be on the lookout.

Feedback is always welcomed, I appreciate you all!!♡♡

End Notes

This is my second story, I've had this idea for awhile now but I wanted to get my first story up and going before I started this one.

I hope you enjoy this story, updates will be at random just like my other one.

Feel free to tell me what you think, I appreciate you guys!! ♡

Also this will hopefully be a series, so look forward to that!!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!